



BED AND BREAKFAST AND BLISS

THE LOCH AT BERRIMA IS WELL WORTH A STAY FOR ITS **UNIQUE APPROACH, COMFY ACCOMMODATION AND FRESH FOOD** FROM SOURCES SUCH AS A CLUTCH OF HENS ALL CALLED HELEN. WORDS **JANE O'CONNELL**

When chef Brigid Kennedy first looked around the bare paddock of what would become The Loch, dozens of thought bubbles emerged. But it was the unique idea of creating a bed and breakfast venue for horses and their owners that momentarily caught her fancy.

'As it turns out, people don't really want luxury accommodation with their horses. If they can afford luxury, they normally have a very flash truck and stay with their horse rather than their horse stay with them.'

But the ideas kept coming, and in partnership with husband Kevin Nott, her Berrima project emerged as four charming self contained suites, spectacular chef's gardens and one of the most popular long lunch venues in the Southern Highlands.

Each of the bedroom suites is named after a Scottish town beginning with 'A', reflecting Kevin's lineage and the Scottish friend who introduced them to the property in 2011. So they are Aberdeen, Arran, Ayr and Argyle (my room for the night.)

Antique furniture and furnishings, including a stately French tapestry in the Argyle suite, are courtesy of family collections. Three of the four suites have queen sized beds, and the fourth (Ayr) can be configured as either a king or two single beds. Bathrooms complement the style of each room; the Argyle's ensuite has a freestanding bath, spacious shower recess and views over the paddock where horses and cattle graze. Savon de Marseille soap is a lovely touch of luxury.

At the other end of the building, separated from the guest rooms by a mezzanine bridge, is the chef appointed kitchen that has been set up for guests to cook to their heart's content. A long timber dining table transitions to the lounge area where a selection of seating options are centred around a large fireplace. If the mood calls for solitude, there are nooks to curl up quietly and read, or for those feeling more social, space to set up a board game or strike up conversation with other guests.

One floor down, the stables have been beautifully converted and filled with antique furniture and bric-a-brac for guests to browse and buy, along with a market stall with baskets of fruit and vegetables picked from the surrounding fields.

Guests are encouraged to explore the many different chef's gardens, planted by Brigid to rotate through the seasons and take advantage of the cool climate that first drew her to the Highlands. She points out different beans and berries, herbs, salad leaves and tiny edible flowers. Down the back, the orchard grows quince, four or five different varieties of apples, peaches, plums, apricots and pears. We wander past the citrus trees and a small olive grove, and say a quick hello to the chooks (they're all named Helen).

Accommodation includes a delicious home cooked breakfast (for our stay it was eggs on a bed of kale and potato hash cake, sweetmeat kibbeh and truffle shavings). The fridge is stocked with jugs of juice and milk, and on the island bench is laid out a hearty buffet for guests to help themselves with bowls of gluten free granola, poached pears and creamy butter to spread on warm, crusty bread.

Breakfast is a decadent sample of the gourmet approach at the centre of The Loch's offerings. Every Sunday, Brigid opens the doors to her Tasting Room and cooks for up to 60 diners. Produce is harvested from her gardens a day or so earlier and beverages showcase the wares of local wine, beer, cider and sparkling water producers. When the weather is warm, lunch is served on the property's back verandah with leafy sultana vines overhead, just a stone's throw from the source for the freshest of paddock to plate dining.

The Loch is an ideal weekend getaway for couples, small groups or multiple generations of family, and children are welcome. Each season delivers a different farm adventure, enhanced by Brigid's creative touch and thoughtfully designed to offer guests an authentic and memorable Highlands experience. ■



DETAILS

The Loch

581 Greenhills Road,
Berrima
theloch.net.au
0411 511 244

Accommodation is open all year round. The Tasting Room is closed last two weeks of December and first two weeks of January.